When the Days Seem Dark

Philip E. Howard

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When the Days Seem Dark

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To
my dear wife,
whose abounding love
and heart of joy
have been sunshine
all along the way.

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CHAPTER I

GOD'S CARE IN DARK DAYS

She was a dear old lady from whom much that life holds had been taken away. She could only sit in her big chair and knit, and rheumatism had so crippled her that her arms were almost fixed in the position in which her visitor saw them, elbows close to her sides, and the hands close together on her breast, with fingers gnarled and bent. Yet she could knit. Her knees were drawn up almost to her hands, those crippled, busy hands of hers.

Her face was radiant. She had passed such a good night. That was the outstanding reason. "Why," she exclaimed joyously, "do you know, I slept for a half hour! And the sunrise! it was just wonderful. As I watched it I thought how good the Lord is to me, and what blessings I do have!" And the busy crippled hands went on knitting most cheerily.

Well, it is something to be able to sleep a half hour. Not every one could see a sunrise. And some folks are prevented from doing any work at all. Sleeping and waking and working—yes, God is good. That was the note of joy in the dear lady's happy talk.

Yet some of us even now, in health and vigor, murmur about our hard lot, and go so far as to worry, and look askance at the least shadow that slips along toward us. We are neither sleepless nor crippled in the body, but we dwell so upon the shadows that overcast our days that we completely miss the great fact of God's unchanging outreach of care for us. Our infirmities, greater or less, make low-pressure areas all along the wide horizon of life, and our sunrises are mostly foggy.

The trouble with some of us is this: we think a day is dark, because something we had has been taken away; because we cannot see the end of a cherished plan; because we fearfully imagine that God is about to reverse his nature and his promises, and trample us under. We count that day when everything goes along as we have gladly expected a very cheerful sun-

shiny day; we are elated accordingly, and we devoutly thank God.

But life is simply a dreadful mess unless we have a sounder philosophy than that. We really cannot rightly distinguish a dark day from a bright day by applying the impulsive tests we so often apply. Have we ever been consistently accurate for any length of time in specifying what was, and what was not, a dark day? Is it not literally true that many a day which once seemed bewilderingly black has proved fairly golden? A boy of thirteen who lost an eye through an accident, and whose sight was in grave danger, came through that dark week with this conclusion. He wrote to a friend: "I have never felt the dear Lord so close to me before in all my life. Every one has been so kind to me, and I do not know what to make of it all. I am almost glad it happened, as it has been the biggest week in my life, but I know there are greater weeks yet to come." Could not many of us who are older testify to like experiences, recurring with their impressive lessons, as though God were trying to explain to us most patiently that we had better let him say what is the color of the day?

Days that seem dark require indeed a profound philosophy of practical living in order to enable us to live through them joyously. Our dearest purposes are often thwarted; our losses seem too heavy to bear; our spirit almost fails under the stress with which life is set about. But over against the accumulated problem stands the firm fact of God's inevitable care. Whatever interests us interests him more. His care is not a varying quantity. He could care no more tenderly and faithfully for us on what we call bright days than on those we call dark.

There is the heartening fact, when the shadows gather. His care is never fitful, as the sunlight is on the mountain side when the cloud shadows are fleeting across the scene, but his care is steadier than the sun behind the clouds. We might as well doubt his care on bright days, if we are going to do him that act of unfaith on dark days. His overseeing and providing love is absolute, not relative to our understanding of it. However we may regard it, that loving provision of his is there anyway; and how dull and unresponsive we are when we do not expose ourselves to its full sunshine,

and accept it as his gift, steadily pouring forth!

These words are written in the night just before the dawn, in a home which has suddenly become a hospital. Death has hovered very close to that home in the last few hours. The countryside is mantled in darkness. Loved ones are the battle ground of the terrific warfare of disease against health and life. The house is riding through the night, down the stellar lanes where the morning stars sang together in æons gone, and they are singing now just before the dawn. As truly as the speeding earth courses in its ordered orbit, so this single, humble home moves along the vast sweep of God's plan. What if the night be heavy and menacing, and spectres of a wearied imagination move out of the dark, and swim into the bewildering maze of seemingly untoward events? This home has its own sure place in God's plan. God is concerned in its welfare. He is not less certain in the dark than in the light. The night and the day, sunshine and shadow are blending ever in his age-long, unending unity of purpose for each one of his children, and his care simply cannot fail.

May we not see all this in these lines by Robert Barbour?

Lord, I thank thee who hast wounded for the mercy that abounded,
For the multitudinous mercy flowing forward like a sea,
For the deeps that, rolling o'er me, arched into an arm that bore me,
For the thunder-step of time that woke thy peace, eternity.

And I thank thee that the thunder never woke one word of wonder,
Only hushed the murmurous thought and drove rebellion far away;
That the wrath revealed outside me showed a rest where I might hide me,
Till the inward clouds rejoined the outer darkness black as they.

Therefore thee I praise for ever, merciful Taker, mighty Giver,
Taking but to give, and giving none but thou to take away;
And if darker clouds encrust thee, though thou slay me, I will trust thee,
For thy hurt is simple healing, and thy darkness simple day.

CHAPTER II

THE POWER OF A QUIET MIND

In the crowded aisles of the huge department store men and women were pressing eagerly about the counters. Christmas was almost at hand, and many gifts were to be bought for loved ones at home and far away. Many a face was brighter and cheerier than on other days in the year; yet many a face looked out through the crowd with frowns and anxious, troubled glances from eyes that snapped with impatience.

It was a restless, moving crowd, now eddying turbulently where broad aisles crossed, now drifting in long lanes reaching as far as the eye could see, breaking into waves and rapids, flowing hither and thither without a moment's rest.

In sharp contrast to the scenes along the busy aisles was the scene within a small room high up in a corner of the building. There, with a single helper near him, sat a

man, who, to all appearances, might be quietly reflecting on a philosophical problem that had just occurred to him. He was talking with a visitor—talking as though in his home library on a winter's night; talking in a low voice whose cadences betrayed not the least commotion within. He was not wasting words. Every word counted. And there was no hurry, no jostling of unruly thoughts, but a steadiness that told of a curbed and disciplined mind. No man in all the city was more quiet in demeanor, more easily urbane, more orderly and patient in word and look than this man, whose toiling, driving, overcoming mind had invented the processes, planned the workings, and designed the attractiveness of a colossal mart where human needs are so met that the restless, happy, anxious crowd is drawn thither without quite knowing why it is so.

That steady, low-voiced, watchful man in the small room is a contradiction to the popular notion of high efficiency. The world looks for bustle and stir beneath the accomplished big result, and measures a man's efficiency by the number of motions he makes, rather than by the number of use-

ful motions he can lead others to make. But the mind that achieves is the quiet mind, the mind that is not flurried by events or its own activities. And the quiet mind is in itself an achievement which must precede such work as we may do at our best.

Clear thought is not possible to the mind that is clouded by flurry. The business man who faces a great opportunity cannot lay hold of it with a masterful grip if he allows himself to become too excitedly interested in the gains which he thinks he sees just beyond the stroke. He must steady his thoughts by hard work on the problem before him. The man who faces a crisis in his affairs can easily become helpless by dwelling nervously on the crisis, and fail to win through it, not from lack of average ability, but from sheer lack of steadiness and quiet thinking. The minister can take a sermon-germ, nourish it into life, and then kill it by mental uneasiness over what he vaguely fears may be its effect on his people.

Nowhere is the power of a quiet mind more definitely felt than in the home circle. The father who rises in the morning, anxious and not rested, looking apprehensively to a day of events not to his liking, can

throw the home life for that day into a fit of the blues which the brightest sunlight cannot drive away. Or, if he so chooses, he can quietly go about his day's duties in so steady and hopeful a fashion that his dear ones will share throughout that day the spirit in which he began it. The mother with her crowding duties and numberless interruptions, her countless steps about the house, and with a mind full of the ever-recurring problems of child-training which she is not to discuss wisely before a mothers' meeting, but must settle on the spot,—that mother can by an unquiet mind make needless problems for herself, double her burdens, and ruin the joyousness of life which should be her children's daily portion. Or, she can learn the art of quietness, keep the family in balance by her own poise, and move steadily on from one duty to another, refusing to be deprived of the power which comes with quietness of mind.

What is true of the home where this power is found is true of every circle in life's relationships. Good work and worry do not go together, clear thought and flurry cannot dwell together in the same mind at the same time. And in his plans and pur-

poses for his children God has ever given prominence to the power which comes from a mind steadily holding to its appointed tasks, in restful, yet ever-achieving, trust in him.

When David charged his son, Solomon, to build a house for Jehovah, the God of Israel, he said to him: "As for me, it was in my heart to build a house unto the name of Jehovah my God. But the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father." And David himself, humbled in spirit, and seeing deeply into life's secrets after many bitter experiences, cried out: "Jehovah, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; . . . Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a

weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in Jehovah from this time forth and for evermore."

Thus the Preacher, when he had seen how man is envied of his neighbor for skilful work, which "is vanity and a striving after wind," utters his conclusion: "Better is a handful, with quietness, than two handfuls, with labor and striving after wind." Or, again, "Wisdom is better than strength, . . . The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the cry of him that ruleth among fools."

When Ahaz was in dire distress in the fear of Rezin and Pekah, Jehovah directed Isaiah to say unto Ahaz, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands. . . . If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." And when the same prophet threatened the people for their trust in Egypt, he reproached them with the charge: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. And ye would not."

The New Testament has a like message again and again, and nowhere more impres-

sively than in the story of the life of Jesus. He was busy, but never hurried; harassed, but never impatient; faced with social and religious problems of the most complex kind, yet never for a moment other than quietly clear in his answers. He pressed home his message with unparalleled vigor, disregarding the consequences to himself, save as he needed to secure by reasonable care the opportunity to utter the truth whenever and wherever it would count for the most. The steadiness of Christ among adverse currents even among his friends; his majestic calm as a storm center of controversy or bitter hatred, were not to be his achievement alone; such power as this he taught his disciples to gain, and they did gain it, even as we can gain it, through him. Lacking the power of a quiet mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, we lack what we can have at the cost of letting go our nervous forebodings, our petty, fussy, hurrying anxieties which have no rightful place in the life of any child of God. With a mind at rest in God, and yet working tirelessly at the tasks he has set for us, we shall waste no time or tissue over the things that our un-Christian forebodings

create, but we shall work, perhaps for the first time in our lives, with the power of a quiet mind free to do its utmost.

"Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our feverish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

"Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire:
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!"

CHAPTER III

PANIC

The crash had come. The long months and years of extension, the square-jawed rapacity of shrewd and powerful personalities, unchecked by any inner sense of rightness, had come into its own,—an outburst of popular wrath, a sudden collapse of public confidence, and loss and bitterness on every hand.

Wall Street was in turmoil. Reasoning or unreasoning, panic was king. The white-crowned caps of mounted reserves tossed in undulating lines above the crowd. The "Street" was in a frenzy. Long lines of anxious depositors wound in serpentine coils about the corridors of a great financial concern, and trailed far down through the restless, jostling crowd on the pavements. Automobiles honked their slow course down narrow lanes that opened to let them pass, and closed again.

Here was palpitation in the very heart-

centers of the financial body of the western world. The crowds moved quickly, nervously. The whole atmosphere was charged with excitement. Would the banks hold out? Would that long line of depositors receive their own? What would the big men of the Street do to support the situation? Where would it end?

In contrast to all this there stood above the steps of the old Sub-Treasury building a strong and silent figure. Beside it and in every direction around it were the hurrying, jostling, worrying crowds, and just over against it that thin long line of anxious men and women. The figure was bareheaded; with strongly molded face slightly upturned. And over that eddying crowd a strong hand was outstretched as if the silent lips, so often heard in crisis times of American history, longed to speak a steadying word. The bronze Washington, with his outstretched hand, was government, power, steadiness of poise, embodied in a figure ever colossal in actuality of achievement, and not the less so in its vivid contrast to the unquiet lesser men below it on that panic day.

That scene was a typical life-scene of to-

day and all days. Panic in the hearts of men whose dearest possessions seemed about to vanish, whose reward of toil, or plunder in piracy, was about to be stricken from the list of their assets; and close beside them, reaching out almost appealingly over their excitement, a reminder of the reassuring fact that somewhere, in untroubled quietness, there are abiding verities, superior to the fatalities of men's follies or impotence, and only awaiting men's call.

It is not only in the financial world that panic seizes upon the hearts of men and women, chilling the blood with the thought of loss, and ruthlessly changed relationships, and perhaps lasting disgrace. There, indeed, with many the passion for money is strong, and any reversal in fortunes approaches the supreme calamity in proportion to the strength of the money passion. But the element of panic in our lives is so likely to explode without any touch of the financial match, that those of us who have no money-worries are by no means exempt from its danger. In that hour when, from any cause, the heart sinks, the blood runs cold, when wild thoughts assail the mind,

when the whole structure of life begins to buckle, panic is ready to take possession.

Yet panic is in itself catastrophe, in itself to be dreaded and shunned and forestalled as the plague itself. Panic is ruin to the judgment, ruin to the will, ruin to the very faculties that can aid in overcoming the causes leading up to the wild fear that so maims us. And worst of all, panic is loss of confidence in God. In the thick of the jostling crowd we forget the outstretched hand.

The mother, watching by the bedside of her little child whose hot hands and flushed cheeks tell of a dangerous fire within which may burn out that slender life, can unfit herself for the task by lacerating her mind with thoughts of the worst, with doubts of the doctor's skill, with imaginations bred in those hours of physical depression just before the dawn. She can thus so forget the tender love of One who has watched with her all the night long, that she will not fully avail herself of his presence and proffered aid. She and the little child are in his keeping, and her tired spirit could find rest in his supporting love if she would not so needlessly undertake to bear the strain of the dreaded loss before that loss has come.

Childhood is not care-free. Its wild fears are grimly real, and get less recognition than those besetting us who are older. What have you done, teacher of boys or girls, to avert the wrecking strain of panic in the life of your pupils? Do you remember the dark hours of your school days when, just before examinations, you were afraid you might not "pass"? You had worked hard. You had received good marks. But to know the whole thing at once! To sit down with paper and pencil and answer any question on any part of the book, and be exalted or disgraced in accordance with that paper of yours—did anything throw you into a panic quite so surely as that! Your boys and girls to-day are not unlike you in those days. Have you steadied them at such times with an encouraging word? Have you led them to higher levels of study-methods, to broader views of the functions of a teacher as something other than an ogre who delights in trapping a student by the pitfall of a question-paper?

Is that growing boy in your home getting help and sympathetic encouragement from you against those hours in the dark when he

stares into the corner shadows, hears in the rattle of a window the sure coming of a burglar, and agonizes silently in cold fear because he thinks you will laugh at him or scold him if he wakes you up? What if your Heavenly Father should treat with contempt your panic-times, when you, too, stare into the shadows closing in about you; when you, too, are somewhat ashamed of your fears, and yet cannot shake them off all alone in the dark? That boy is no less in distress than you are. Do you fairly represent the fatherhood of God in your exhibit of fatherhood toward him? When panic would be king, then is the Christian's high opportunity of faith.

Years ago, when delegates to the First World's Sunday School Convention were on their way to London on the Bothnia, a fire broke out in the cotton in the hold. The passengers gathered on the upper deck well forward to watch the crew hoist the burning bales from the heart of the ship and heave them overboard. One man whose wife had just retired for the night hastened to her stateroom and urged her to dress and go on deck. "Oh, I am sure everything will be all right," she said quietly. "I think

I'll just go to sleep." "Well," he urged, "whether you feel afraid of the result or not, do come up and *see* the fire anyway!" She appeared on deck shortly, and joined the crowd who were watching the weird sight. When the fire had been entirely put out, the passengers gathered by the bridge and sang the doxology. As the good woman made her way with her husband to their stateroom, she said earnestly, "We made one mistake up there." "What's that?" he inquired. "Oh," answered his wife, "we ought to have sung the doxology while the fire was burning!"

Those of us who will sing the doxology while the fire is burning will not be in a panic. And doxologies are far more sensible than panics at any time. For in what circumstances are we justified in losing our judgment, our courage, our confidence in God?

The wiser heads in Wall Street on that panicky day knew that a restoration of public confidence was needed to check the unrest. Men in whom the people had confidence must come forward and take the burden of the hour. There could be no panic when everybody had confidence in the

management. Accordingly managements were revised, and confidence widely restored. Strong men declared and demonstrated that they were prepared to meet the emergency, and government gave assurance of the use of great reserves to stay the impending ruin of that hour.

Does any one of us need a change of management? What elements, what ideals, what foundations have we to give us freedom from the ravages of panic in ourselves? What reserves have we to buttress the tottering walls of our defense against the collapse of character. Midianites and Amalekites go down in panic. Jehovah does not purpose that for his people. The disciples on that stormy sea of Galilee were terrorized by what they saw coming to them through the dark. But the Master's prompt identification of himself shifted the emphasis of the scene completely. It is ever his way. "It is I, be not afraid." He takes charge, assumes the burden, utters reassuring words, and turns distraction and panic into quiet, trustful thought about himself. That disciple who seemed to have peculiar capacity for receiving the outpoured love of Jesus writes to others, in order that their

joy may be full, this high and simple message of security, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . . And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Is there any room for panic here? It is a sure and lasting repose in struggle, a perennial pledge of strength by the way, of steadiness of soul in every crisis, and of a security that nothing need disturb unless we choose the transitory and futile rather than the abiding verities.

CHAPTER IV

CAPITALIZING OUR CRISES

Crises are seldom what we would choose, if we could have our way. Crises are sometimes conjunctions of events that we go to great lengths of manipulation to prevent, for if we can only head off certain untoward happenings in time, then perhaps they never will meet at the dreaded point.

It is well worth while to take a good deal of trouble to divert some of the joinings of events in which we foresee calamity. We can sometimes by wise counsel head off a letter that would have broken up friendly relationships if it had gone its way. We can get the attention of a committee fixed upon the heart of a matter so interestedly that a discussion about non-essentials, which had latent explosive power, drops out of sight in the light of a truer vision. And sometimes when affairs are rushing headlong into a state of things utterly contrary

to right and fairness, we may well take time and trouble to get them on the right road again. Some potential crises ought clearly never to occur.

But many of us are not discriminating about this. We select the wrong things to head off. Perhaps we see personal discomfort ahead, or perhaps we have a lack of conclusiveness in our natures that holds us back from even letting anything decisive come to pass if we can help it. Sometimes we really are not clear about what we ought to do, and the occasion just slips by us in the fog, and is gone. But is it not usually true that when we would give almost anything to avoid a crisis, it is because we feel like the driver of a runaway team, who thinks that if he can only keep it going without hitting anything, he will come through safely when the horses get tired?

The trouble is that some of the most forbidding crises are exactly what we would most welcome if we only knew their identity, even as a small boy, lost and bewildered in the dark woods, would rush into the arms of that terrifying figure yonder in the dusk, if he but realized that the figure is his own father out looking for him. Wouldn't it be

wise for us to be more hospitable than we are to crises?

The discipline is good. Try as we may to avoid issues, to ameliorate the shock of decisiveness, the hour comes when we must act, whether we like to or not. Abraham may remain a pastoral chieftain, or he may father a chosen people. God brings him to a flat decision. Moses cannot hold to Egypt while he makes a trial trip with the Hebrews into the desert to see how he is going to like it. Saul of Tarsus cannot take a day or two for considering what middle ground he can find between a more liberal attitude toward the followers of the Nazarene, and a sharp break with his previous conscientious convictions. The vision on the Damascus road was something more than a tentative suggestion looking toward a possible alteration of attitude. It was a blinding crisis, out of which Paul got the whole glorious meaning without dodging the issue. But some men might have tried to shuffle and argue, and defer after the fashion of Donald Hankey's eminent theologian in "A Student In Arms," who thus summed up a debate: "Well, gentlemen, speaking for myself, I think I may venture

to say that I should feel inclined to favor a tendency in a positive direction, with reservations."

Dodging a crisis that God provides is the worst, the stupidest way in which we can treat it. For divine discipline requires that no crisis shall scare us or shock us out of obedience to God. So instead of dodging our crises, or groaning about them, why not capitalize them by an investment of the most joyous faith, and an expectant welcome? If an end to something must come, it is but the beginning of something new from God's hand. If things ought not to go on as they are, why doubt that God is ready to reveal and to put through a better arrangement? A crisis yields value in direct ratio to our investment in it. And it leaves us a bit the worse off when we let timidity prevent us from the good investment of obedient faith.

But there are crises so crowded with import beyond any rearrangement of outward circumstances that the whole spiritual status may have to be changed because of them. One of our difficulties is our fondness for status. We are not mobile enough, when it comes to any stir in the processes by which

God forwards our life. Perhaps we have been holding fast to a rock-ribbed conviction that is anything but scriptural. In a quiet time with an overlooked part of God's Word the Spirit sends a new light shining up through a passage we had not known was there, and suddenly we know that the wrong conviction must yield to the Scripture truth. As in a flash we see a little of what it will mean to be separated from that favorite notion, and to follow the plain truth. How the weakness of the flesh revolts from the crisis!

Such crises are spiritually very fruitful if we do not spoil them by smoothing them away. It is the thing just beyond the decision that gives us concern, but to refuse the challenge of truth at such an hour is disastrous beyond our most imaginative fears. As Christian men and women shall we not joyously claim for ourselves Paul's experience, as given in Weymouth's translation of Philippians 1:12, "Now I would have you know, brethren, that what I have gone through has turned out to the furtherance of the Good News, rather than otherwise."

And what more than that could we ask

as the yield from the investment of faith that we make in our crises?

CHAPTER V

WHEN CHANGES COME

If one were to judge by the traffic, the love of change is an overpowering passion of the soul. Endlessly the shuttle of traffic weaves its web of change over the face of the earth, over the lives of men. All of us feel the stir of it, the desire for a different outlook, for glimpses of other folk and scenes. Hence the restless movement on land and sea, the currents of enterprise and adventure and exploration.

But the love of change does not bear upon life quite so hard as the fear of it. We welcome the changes that we devise for ourselves; we look with concern at the horizon from which we conjecture the possible coming of changes not of our choosing. We are great believers in things as they are; we are devotees of the arrangements with which we are familiar,—unless, in-

deed, we ourselves decide that they ought to be different.

We do not always discriminate wisely in proposing changes, for some of the things we restlessly seek are very unsatisfying when we get them, while others that would be infinitely a gain to us are kept at a distance by our fear or our indifference. However, so long as we think we are managing the affair, and are proceeding with gathered experiences that we approve, we are likely to be happy about it.

It is the thing over which we have no real control that stirs our misgivings. The loss of work through some economic upheaval; the death of loved ones; the breaking down of health; the inroads of age,—what forebodings darken the moments when our thoughts hover about such prospects!

It is strikingly true that the issues well recognized by most of us to be wrapped up in the hidden plans of God are those that we most acutely dread, not the things in which we perceive a place for our controlling hand. For we often cry out in crises, "Oh, it would be so different if I could only *do* something about it; but I can only wait!" The changes most feared, then,

are those that come straight from the One who loves us most, not reshaped by any human touch!

We should not have the fear of change that we do have, if we had more fear of distrusting God. In his unfolding plan for our lives there will always be changes quite beyond our foresight or planning. You note year after year a great pine-tree where two mountain streams meet in a wonderful forest. One day you pass that way and the tree is a wreck, splintered unbelievably by the lightning stroke. You thought of that tree as a permanent part of the landscape, and you expected to see it each year when you took your mountain outing. But it is gone now. The change has come, the type of change that we know does come. Why not quietly realize the fact of change, and find a way to survive the disappearance of the old, loved landmarks and friends, with a trustful spirit? We are likely to think that things will go on as they are, until we come upon the stricken pine, or the empty chair, or the news of an old friend's Home-going. We know better. Such changes are the normal experience of mankind.

But when changes come we ought not to

find ourselves hardened to them. We need not let the certainty of altered circumstances, the sure coming of life into empty places, make any lines of grimness in the face that we turn toward the facts. Some of the most precious disciplines of life come to us after we have decided not to lock up our griefs behind the iron doors of silent, secret agony, but to let the whole meaning of the change through which we have passed take its full share in mellowing our sympathies, and in making us channels of an understanding helpfulness to others.

A country woman, whose life was smitten with a keep disappointment in its earlier years, was so distracted by her grief that reason failed again and again. But God had not let go of her life, and as the years passed she emerged into the large and sunlit atmosphere of joy in Christ. Very poor in this world's goods, she became rich in other ways, and her home became a Bethel for the unfortunate and sinning. It was her purpose, she said, that no one who visited it should leave without a blessing. She stood one day in the open doorway of another home, about to take her leave after a brief call upon that household. They had knelt

in prayer with her, at her own request, and she had asked God to bless all within that home. She turned back as she was about to leave, and with a quiet smile upon her face she said: "You know we cannot always tell just how God will send the blessing we ask for. He will surely send it,"—and then with a look of remembrance and of joy, "but it may be the pruning hook, you know." By way of the pruning hook her own life was bearing fruit even in that moment. And fruit-bearing does not arise from grim resignation.

Just now the world is a welter of bewildering changes, running like streams of volcanic fire along new channels, excoriating life with a fury that staggers the mind. Not only the glare of national upheavals is in our eyes but the fire burns its way into the heart of our tenderest personal relationships. How are men and women to meet the violent, cataclysmic changes that are coming into individual lives the world over? In the thick of it all, one age-long fact looms with a pure and reassuring glory before our smitten eyes.

There walks with us One who does not change, in a life-giving relationship that

does not change, nor has changed from the beginning.

He was before the dawn of things. He walks unweariedly with man through man's long day. He waits in the red sunset of the age to prepare a new day glorious even beyond prophetic power to disclose in its fulness. Those who walk with Him are in the world, but not of it, moving with understanding mind and strong heart and joyous faith straight through the storms of change, gathering up into a peace that passeth understanding the very elements of life that apart from Him are impossible to resolve into the material of hope and joy. That of which I may be deprived was never permanent; that which cannot be taken away I am not to lose. All the deepest elements of the sweet and holy relationships of life no violence of change can take from me, for the Christ with whom I walk gave them to me, and wove them into the wonder that we call life. So while my heart may ache with longing for those who have been called Home, while I may be stripped of goods and position and dear associations, I may take the road day by day with my Friend, and in that unending fellowship talk with

Him about the memories I cherish, while looking with all joy and trustfulness for the next disclosure of his plan.

Indeed, when changes come, Christ not only does not go, but—if that were possible—draws even closer than before. Are we really afraid that, having put our trust in Him, we shall find Him unequal to our need of guidance and comfort? Shall we not rather, from full hearts and an abounding faith, sing with an ever-deepening joy as we journey,

"In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear,
And safe in such confiding,
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

"Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim;
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him."

CHAPTER VI

GIVING THANKS FOR WHAT WE DO NOT RECEIVE

When our hearts are lifted in thanksgiving to God for unbounded mercies, the broader and deeper view of thanksgiving is often obscured by the thought that God's bounty toward us consists wholly of what we receive. The overflowing horn of plenty is a common sign of the thanksgiving spirit, —the full harvest gathered in readiness for crowded barns, and the laden table, commonly express the readily understood causes for gratitude. But we have as good reason to be thankful for what God has not permitted us to receive as we have for the recognized gifts that he has poured into our lives.

We are such hungry and ill-advised children in our eagerness for the things of this life that we need quite as much the

restraint of a wise Father, lovingly refusing our thoughtless desires, as we do the lavish hand of ready giving extended to us by the same loving Father. Every one of us can look back to a day when we were almost ready to demand of God that he should do for us that which our whole soul longed for with passionate desire. Nothing else would do; no other matter in our lives seemed so important just then as this one thing that we were asking of him. Yet in later days we have come to learn with profound gratitude God's infinite, loving wisdom in withholding from us the one thing that we were then convinced was needful. We cannot know all the circumstances that God knows; we cannot understand the subtle forces that are at work to make us wish for the worst, and pray for damage when we are acting on the supposition that we are seeking what is best. But we can know, with a profound conviction that enables us to put that knowledge into practise, that God is just as wise and tender and bounteous in his withholdings as he is in his givings. Indeed, some of us have known how blessed it is to realize that God himself, when he is holding back something for which we have asked, is,

by that very act, pouring out upon us the highest blessing which at that moment his infinite wisdom can prepare.

It is a common experience, too, that we may be unspeakably grateful for the ever-amazing fact that we have not received what we deserve. Each one knows well enough what he means by this. It is not possible for the human mind to picture with perfect vividness the utter and overwhelming contrast that there is between the sin-stained soul and the stainless Lord of Glory. It is well for us that we do not have to set up such a contrast as this in words, and that God does not purpose that we shall be living in the dread shadow of such a picture as that. We who have deserved death are by his mercy not called upon to accept our deserts, but on the contrary we are offered abounding life. Such a love as this on the part of One to whom any sin must be utterly abhorrent is beyond our human measures; but our hearts leap with a glad thanksgiving joy because we have a Father whose love has gone to such lengths as this. In the light of such a love it is only the most recreant spirit, perverse and headstrong in its haste away from God, that can for an

instant wish to presume upon this tenderness and mercy.

Our gratitude to God is quickened by the memory of the disasters that we were quite sure were headed in our direction, and yet which were by his loving hand diverted in ways that we could not have compassed at all. Underneath all the manifold examples of this in the more easily discerned things of life, are the averted spiritual troubles that were at one time heading toward us with what seemed to be an unavoidable calamity. We did not want to be as we feared we were going to be. Habits of long standing, tendencies that had not had any early control, likes and dislikes that were warping us out of normal health of body and mind and spirit, were nevertheless doing their work so thoroughly that the end seemed only too near, and too dark for us to face at all. Yet in that very hour, when in our helplessness we have turned to God and have committed ourselves to him, the most marvelous peace has come, and the clouds on the horizon have been driven away by the strong winds of heaven, the light of a new day has broken in upon us, and that which seemed about to crush us

has been met by the "strong Son of God" and abolished. Who is there, in mature life, who cannot recall with a still amazed and still mystified thankfulness such divertings and such abolishings of calamity? There is hardly anything else in experience which so heightens our conception of the mercy of God, and which so quickens the heart into thankfulness, as this interference of God with the destiny that we were blindly devising for ourselves.

We may well be grateful that God has withheld from us some of the faculties that we have thought so needful to the working out of his plans in our lives. Some men are never fruitful in any wide usefulness to mankind until they are reduced to the concentrated use of some one faculty. Heroism of the purest sort shines forth in lives that have been deprived of cherished abilities, and the whole nature has seemed to go out with a new power into the lives of other men through a hitherto unsuspected ability. Take away one man's powers of locomotion, and in his helplessness and enforced quiet he becomes a more distinguished winner of souls than ever, through conversations and through personal letters, and leads thousands

of others out into the same work by his writings. Draw the veil over another man's eyes, and his soul pours itself out in music or in poetry or in a high order of executive work. Let a woman be recalled from a place of high social distinction and many neighborhood duties to the care of some one who is utterly dependent upon her, or let her be removed from public life by circumstances that she can neither explain nor avoid, and a new center of radiance has been established, which might have been lost to the world. Who knows what can be done through any one of us until God has pointed out, perhaps by elimination, the one great thing for that life to do?

Stephen Phillips in his poem, "To Milton. —Blind," thus sets forth this truth:

"He who said suddenly, 'Let there be light!'
To thee the dark deliberately gave;
That those full eyes might undistracted be
By this beguiling show of sky and field,
This brilliance, that so lures us from the Truth.
He gave thee back original night, His own
Tremendous canvas, large and blank and free,
Where at each thought a star flashed out and sang.
O blinded with a special lightning, thou
Hadst once again the virgin Dark! and when
The pleasant flowery sight, which had deterred
Thine eyes from seeing, when this recent world
Was quite withdrawn; then burst upon thy view
The elder glory."

Thanksgiving must mean much more to us than the counting up of material gains. Great as such blessings are in many lives, thankfulness is no mere sense of satisfaction because of additions to the gains that can be measured by rule and weight. There are empty places in our lives for which we may well be unspeakably grateful.

CHAPTER VII

SUFFERING PERFECTLY

To suffer is a privilege. To escape from this privilege is the purpose of weaker souls who do not know what suffering means. To suffer is to bear up, to carry the burden given to us to carry, without shirking. Its essence is not in pain as an affliction, but in the bearing of pain as a challenge to courage and endurance.

Suffering in the truest sense cannot fairly be pictured by a crushed and baffled wreck of a man, but rather by the vision of a form erect and competent, sturdily set up for the lifting of loads and the carrying of cares, pushing on enduringly. To suffer is to bear up into the teeth of things, painfully if need be, but with no unstringing of fiber, no liquefying of the bones, no lapse into a mere quiver of aches and pains.

In its true meaning, suffering is not what we feel in the sensitive nerves of body

or spirit, so much as the up-bearing by which we meet the painful and the burdensome. The word is made up of two Latin words, *sub,*—under, and *fero,*—carry, or bear, which when taken together have the significance of bearing up from under, as when one carries a burden. It is therefore a word the emphasis of which is altogether on the way by which we meet, or carry, the burden, rather than on the pain or stress caused by the burden.

And when we place the emphasis where it belongs, when we count it a joy to be pushing on with our shoulders under the load, when we must throw all our powers into severest action until the doing hurts,—then we begin to catch the meaning of suffering as a privilege in the school of character.

For this root-meaning of suffering by no means takes away its hardness. To bear up is a severe gymnastic for body and soul. To "suffer" as nobly and as thoroughly as we know how is an achievement of no mean proportions. It is less taxing to the fiber of character to drop back into the commonplace suffering which reposes on the sympathy of friends, and awakens a brooding self-pity. To bear up, and to do it hourly,

daily, endlessly; to bear up under a weight of sorrow, and chagrin, and sense of failure; to do the thing we must do, whether we feel like it or not,—all this has its part in the up-bearing of body and spirit that suffering implies. The hardness does not disappear, but works out its mission in a character better fitted to endure hardness to the very end.

Every true life is the story of achievement in suffering, in bearing up. It is the glory of every such life that it meets its obligations sturdily, bears its burdens with steady gains in poise and deep serenity of soul, and makes no compromise with the thing that is hard to do or to bear. Even the sense of failure, reaching for the very heart with its choking death-grip on the springs of life, does not master the man who will suffer courageously, who will bear up under the consciousness of his own shortcomings, in the quiet trust of a child of God who dares to be disciplined by up-bearing. To suffer under a sense of failure is not to become swamped in failure, but to push on and up and out of the weight of past failures by the grace of Christ into buoyancy and progress straight through

the buffetings we are sure to encounter.

When disappointment comes, when the cherished hope fades, it is then, too, that we need to read suffering aright. Not the pain of it, but the up-bearing under it, ought to be in our thought. The sermon we meant to preach, when we had the clear vision alone with God, was not the one that the people heard from the pulpit; the business plan that looked so well on paper did not result in practise as it did in prospect; the dinner so carefully arranged for the guest of honor did not come through wholly unscathed; the dream of a college course was changed by new obligations to the drudgery of the store. In all these issues of life, none of them trivial to the responsible actor in them, the bearing-up under disappointment is a duty and a discipline. Some are embittered by such dashing of their hopes, and some grow surly and ill-natured and cynical. But those who understand the uplift of suffering come triumphantly out of such experiences by up-bearing in them.

Those who do not know suffering in its real essence can do but little to help others. So many of us who know what pain is

might be immensely more useful to others who know pain, if we could grasp the meaning of suffering, and accept its disciplinary work in us. It is not enough, in helping others, to have had pain, and illness, and sorrow, and to say so in an attempt at sympathy. For sympathy is "suffering with," —bearing up *with* others, as we would if we should put our shoulder under a load too heavy for a fellow-traveler on the road, and bear up *with* him. And unless we do better than recount our pains and our sorrows in our effort to help others, we simply add to the story of the world's grief, which has no real cheer in it for any sufferer. But if we can enter understandingly into another's distress, and help him to bear it by emphasizing the blessings of up-bearing as we have known them, and as we can help our friend to know them, we have sympathized, suffered with, up-borne with him in his hour of trial.

The pathos of the failing companionship in Gethsemane was in the word "with." "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" Could ye not enter into my need, be with me in it, share it with me for just a little while, and with me bear up the burden?

The utter loneliness of Jesus among his chosen friends is painfully clear in that hour of his need. And it may be that loneliness has gripped the soul of one who is counting upon you, because you never do enter fully into the up-bearing of his burdens *with* him, suffering with him for even a little while.

In the up-bearing under burdens we are limited to this life. If we are to suffer with others for their uplifting, or alone, as a child of God in his sure keeping, it must be accomplished here. It is this thought that Ugo Bassi set forth in his "Sermon in the Hospital," and the truth of it is a background against which the glory of suffering shines forth upon all life.

"One thought has often stayed by me
In the night-watches, which has brought at least
The patience for the hour, and made the pain
No more a burden which I groaned to leave,
But something precious which I feared to lose.

* * * * * * * * *

But if, impatient, thou let slip thy cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
Nor in another; here, and here alone,
Is given thee to *suffer* for God's sake.
In other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve him and love him, praise him, work for him,
Grow near and nearer him with all delight;
But then we shall not any more be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here.

Canst thou not suffer then one hour,—or two?
If he should call thee from thy cross to-day,
Saying, It is finished!—that hard cross of thine
From which thou prayest for deliverance,
Thinkest thou not some passion of regret
Would overcome thee? Thou wouldst say, 'So soon?
Let me go back and suffer yet a while
More patiently;—I have not yet praised God.'
And he might answer to thee,—'Never more,
All pain is done with.' Whenso'er it comes,
That summons that we look for, it will seem
Soon, yea too soon. Let us take heed in time
That God may now be glorified in us;
And while we suffer, let us set our souls
To suffer perfectly; since this alone,
The suffering, which is this world's special grace,
May here be perfected and left behind."

CHAPTER VIII

GOD'S DELIVERANCES

They are not quite like ours. When we have kept a man in prison for a few years, we may, under certain conditions, parole him. He goes out to work as far as his tether will let him, but the old charge still has a light line tied to him, and any tug on it reminds him that his freedom is not all that it might be.

When he has served his time he goes out nominally a free man, but really not free. For the dark past reaches out a detaining hand if he would wholly forget it, and some doors that swing wide for the entrance of other men too often open only about enough for him to get his foot in for a moment, and then shut again, with the man on the outside where he was.

We say we have set poor John Doe free. But John Doe knows better. Freedom isn't all that it is cracked up to be when the past

can be so binding as to make a man careful about revealing it, lest the penalty he once paid must be paid over again in costly ways among his neighbors.

God's deliverances are not of the tether or detaining sort. When he delivers a man from bondage, the freedom that man enjoys is so complete that the only way in which the psalmist can express it is by the illimitable distance between east and west to mark the remoteness of the new liberty from the old chains, and there is even a promise on record in which the separation from the past sin is expressed by such a miracle as the actual forgetting of the sin by the mind of God. That ought to be deliverance enough for any one. It is God's way, not man's.

God's deliverances, too, are not merely arranged to break our bonds, but to keep us from getting into the shackles in the first place. Who does not look back to a critical hour—yes, many such hours—when he would have done an evil thing if God had only let him alone at the moment. But just then God spoke to him in a still small voice, in the song of a bird, the call of the stream, the cheery voice of a friend, in the austere

demand of a pressing duty, in the laughter of a child—and the spirit revolted against the evil purpose, and the man went free.

"A door clanks loose, the gust beats by,
The chairs stand plain about;
Upon the curving mantel high
The carved heads stand out.
The maids go down to brew and bake,
And on the dark stairs make
A clatter, sudden, shrill—
Lord, here am I
Clear of the night and ready for thy will."

There is no part of God's dealings with us as Christians that holds us greater debtors to him than his interruptions of our wrong purposes, and his warnings to stand clear of whatever would entangle us. "In old days," writes George Eliot in "Silas Marner," "there were angels who came and took men by the hand, and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now, but yet men are led away from threatening destruction; a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's."

Perhaps our consciousness of God's deliverances is never quite so great as when

we are freed from what we call "a tight place." Circumstances have pressed in upon us until we realize our utter helplessness in the face of the besetting events. Our sense of freedom is gone, and it is a common thing to say that our hands are tied. Impotence is so manifest that we are then in danger of profound discouragement, and we have a stifled and hunted desperateness holding us in its grip.

Suddenly, by some unforeseen and, so far as we are concerned, unmanaged grouping of events, we come out into the clear spaces and broad relief of freedom. It is easy then to thank God and to praise him for the deliverance and release that we can explain only by reference to his providence, and not by anything that we have done at all.

Some of us pass through experiences of this type again and again and never quite learn the lesson that we were delivered just as much while circumstances were simply smothering us as we were when the pressure was lifted. No prison house perverted the vision of the apostles into despair. Out from their prison walls came songs, and letters of joyous encouragement to friends

far away, and undying testimony to God's deliverance, even while in prison they seemed to be shut away from deliverance. The freedom of the child of God and his deliverance from bondage of any sort is not a merely outward, but an inward matter, and if the inward freedom and the outward coincide, the lesser freedom, which is the outward, is only an added testimony to the freedom of greater reality and prominence, which is the inward.

God's deliverances do not consist in getting us clear of bolts and bars and iron gates merely on special occasions. Some of the freest spirits are those most severely set about by so-called hindrances. His deliverances go back for their beginnings to the day when we accepted the great freedom offered to those who become the bondslaves of Christ, and the deliverances stream across life and through it like the dawnlight that banishes darkness by its radiance.

CHAPTER IX

STANDING STILL

There is nothing harder for some temperaments than just to wait. It would be easier to face a whole army of immediate problems than to wait a whole day for a single deferred problem to be settled. That is the attitude of many of us toward life and work, and there are certain characteristics that such an attitude denotes which are worth examining.

In the first place, it is hard to wait because we do not take long views; what we want, we want badly and want now. So if an answer to a letter is delayed, we wish we had asked our friend to telegraph. If a train is held up by a snowstorm, not one man in ten on that train knows how to spend the waiting time profitably or with any peace of mind, and the question that beats incessantly upon his brain is, "When are we going to start?" A young man

wants to know what his future financial state will be, and sometimes he will undermine his usefulness for the immediate duty by nervous anxiety over the conditions that may obtain ten years hence. It is hard for us to take long views, because we are accustomed to deal with microscopes instead of telescopes in our judgments.

Some of us never do see things in their everlasting relationships; we cannot picture to ourselves the river reaching on through miles of territory down to the sea, but have a mind only to the little eddy in which our boat turns around and around. Immediacy has its place, but the kind of immediacy that counts most is that which works under the inspired patience of a long view of God's unfolding providences. Some men seem able to wait cheerfully as long as God prefers that they should wait; others are restive under the divine internments, and lose whatever value these periods of life may have through an unholy impatience to know when the next move will be made. Mountaineers and sailors often seem irritatingly slow to the tenderfoot or the landsman, but men who live with great horizons about them learn to take longer views than

those who beat out their strength against the alley walls of a narrow life.

Another reason why we find it hard to wait is because we can scarcely believe that God is doing any work unless we are busy. The spirit of the serene and trustful servant of God is not fretting over the motions made or not made by these human hands of ours in any kind of toil. To such there is keen joy in taking somewhat the position of an alert observer, who, while working with the tools that he has, is rejoiced to see how the "Master of all good workmen" is carrying forward larger plans for that workman's own life than he himself could ever devise. "What hath God wrought!" was the message flashed over the first telegraph line. That message is needed to-day by those of us who think that unless our hands are on the experiment or the task the stars might cease to move in their orbits.

There is a very delightful chapter on "The Prominent Man" in Mrs. Laura E. Richards' book, "The Golden Windows." While hurrying to business one morning, he slipped on a piece of ice, fell, and broke his leg. It was to be a big day for him, and his very natural outcry was, "What will be-

come of everything?" He was taken to his home, and there in his distress he was visited by the Angel-Who-Attends-to-Things. After inquiring about his state of health, the angel advised him not to worry.

"The truth is," said the angel, "I put that piece of ice there myself; I wanted to get rid of you."

Then the angel went on to explain that if The Prominent Man had attended the meeting that he expected to attend that day, a new man whose voice should have been heard would not have felt free to speak; and if he had given the lecture that he intended to give later in the day on an important matter affecting large issues, he would have done harm. The angel assured him that when the crisis was over it would be all right for him to deliver the lecture, because then it would harm no one.

" 'Am I awake, or is this a dream?' cried The Prominent Man.

" 'More or less,' said the angel, 'it is what you call life.'

" 'But—but—but'——cried the man, 'this is terrible; you don't know anything about business.'

" 'My dear soul,' said the angel, 'what do

you take me for?' and he went away and told the nurse to give her patient a composing draught."

Some of us are so impressed with our own importance that we are forgetting God's importance. We cannot wait for him; something must be done, and we are the ones to do it. Thus the turmoil of spirit goes on and the profitable lesson of waiting upon God is not learned.

When the terrifying vision of Pharaoh's hosts broke upon the uplifted eyes of the children of Israel, those same children were "sore afraid." They were in a turmoil of anxiety at once. Hadn't they told Moses that he was heading in the wrong direction? Hadn't they told him to let them alone where they were, and he had now brought them out into an awful fix? Into that wild mêlée of fear and recrimination and unfaith, Moses spoke not a message of vigorous action to meet the oncoming disaster, but the clear strong words, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day." In the overwhelming result, the Israelites appear to have had about as much hand as we have in many of the things that God does for us,

when, for one strong, steadying moment, he tells us to stand still and see.

Standing still on some occasions is the paramount duty of the follower of Christ. There are times when we must be merely onlookers, when the flesh and the brain refuse to work, hopes shrivel like the autumn leaves, and we simply do not know which way to turn. It may be just then that we shall learn for the first time how to stand still in perfect peace and quietness of soul, not idling away our time, not hopelessly limp and heedless of the outcome, but working on in such ways as may be given to us, observing with eager joy the way in which God will work it all out to a perfectly glorious ending. All our little fussiness and haste, all our strong anxiety and warping care are as futile as the tugging of a little child's hands at the great iron knob of a closed and barred gate through which his loving father does not care to have him go just then.

Standing still is often the only way by which we go forward, the only way by which we will know what God can do for such as we are. He is the worker, and the sooner we give him that place and are con-

tent to wait when he asks us to wait without evidence of progress, the sooner he will be able to send us forward as the forthfaring messengers of his own choosing, who can wait or go with equal joy.

CHAPTER X

WHEN WE ARE DISCOURAGED

After hard work, depression and the valley beyond the hill. After the doing of a great service, a great slump. After elation and vision and high altitudes of body and spirit, then the tangled swamp. And these conditions are taken almost as a matter of course, because of temperament, or some other scapegoat impostor of the mind's own making. That is the pity of it, that the slump of the spirit is supposed to be, if not inevitable, at least not so very strange.

But it is strange that Christians should accept such conditions as tamely as some do. Many a minister expects blue Monday, and he has it. Many a teacher almost counts upon being worn out after a session with the class nobody else wants. Many a man or a woman finishes a big task under pressure with a certain self-pitying curiosity as to what kind of temporary breakdown is to follow. It is supposed to be the common

lot, and like good fatalists some expect the worst, and get pretty nearly what they expect.

Discouragement, however, and the depression that so often follows a climax of work, are not necessary. The body needs no such periods; the mind needs none; the spirit is not at home on such low levels. What possible reason is there why elation must be followed by enervation; and triumph by total eclipse of the spirit that was an hour ago triumphant? And if there is no "must" about it, why submit? Why slump?

Of course a letting down of special tension may be needed after a climax of effort, but that can be accepted with joy, as resting time, without the least burden of depression. A man who must be working all the time, and who, like a bicycle rider, cannot keep his balance unless he is moving, has never learned the simplest principles of a just balance between work and rest. If, when he ought to rest, he finds himself half submerged in a morass of regrets, and doubts, and fears, and work is the only thing he knows that will hoist him to solid ground again, he may as well make up his

mind that he knows as little about work as he does about rest. He is pathetically unprepared for either state. He thinks that rest includes the very opposite of rest, depression. He thinks that work is a sufficient cure for disquiet and discouragement. He wants to work when he should be resting, and whether he likes it or not, the time comes when he works like a man who badly needs rest. Then he is so afraid of the depression that usually comes when he eases the tension, that he works on in a half-sick fashion anyway. No, resting after toil need not, must not, include depression. It is not the resting that makes the trouble.

Discouragement, depression, regrets that eat out the heart, hopelessness as to the future, come to the indolent quite as distressingly as to the worker. Many an idler lives in the very quagmire of such a spirit, and to him even work seems to offer no lift out of it. For work is not an attractive remedy to him. A traveler in the far South shortly after the Civil War, saw at several stations on the line a nonchalant individual who seemed to be on the lookout for something. Finally the traveler said to him:

"Well, my friend, are you looking for work down this way?"

"Stranger," replied the other slowly, "that's exactly what I hain't a-lookin' for!"

That is also just what some downhearted folk "hain't a-lookin' for"; and if they were, there would be no assurance that having found it their depression would be cured.

A discouraged spirit is the symptom of a more serious condition of the life than most of us will admit to ourselves. Uncomfortable though it is, we do not regard that symptom with nearly enough dread and repugnance. For back of it, in reality, is a subtle distrust of God. The mind at once revolts from that assertion. But what other reason can explain the depression that seizes upon a Christian, whose Heavenly Father is the Lord God Almighty? Can any of us seriously believe that if we were wholly trusting God to be as good as his promises we could find or keep on hand any cause for discouragement?

Our past sins could not keep us under. They are forgotten by him in the light of forgiving love. God is not even remembering them, since we accepted his Son's dis-

position of them. Why should we keep them in mind?

Our weakness surely could not depress us, for the confiding soul knows that in our weakness Christ's strength is rounded out into fulness of power.

Weariness could not draw us down to a low spiritual tone, for the tired worker is his special yokefellow, and what rest it is to companion with him in the furrow!

Elation of spirit need not then look for a collapse, because there could be no height greater than the sustained walk, in loving confidence, with him. What light of day floods the high levels and the gleaming peaks of that land of our pilgrimage! Thus one of the three favorite songs of the blind and dying Ira D. Sankey was "There'll be no Dark Valley When Jesus Comes."

The shade of the juniper tree gives way to breezy upland sunshine, and the gloom of a broken spirit seems like an evil dream whose clutch is gone with the waking song of birds in the trees outside the window.

Oh, the shame of it, that we should ever doubt Him so! Is it that he has done too much for us, so that we become like spoiled children? As the gentle-spirited Robert

Barbour wrote: "The Lord's goodness surrounds us at every moment. I walk through it almost with difficulty, as through thick grass and flowers." Distrust of God plays havoc with life and work, underlies the heartsickness that cuts the sinews of effort. And to the Christian discouragement might as well be stripped of all disguises, and stand out frankly as sheer, undeniable distrust of a loving Father who wants to do for us in all things more than we can ask or think.

Why not give him the opportunity he seeks to put underneath us the everlasting arms? Why not make an end of distrust and complaint, of doubt and fear? Why not be as joyous as he wishes us to be? Why not let him do what he wants to do for us and be glad about it?

CHAPTER XI

GOD IS GOOD

The little girl could not bear to have her mother leave her in the dark. Even with the sound of the household about her, the child was lonely and forlorn. But bedtime had come, and in her small bed she must remain, while mother went downstairs.

The mother comforted her as best she could, and as she left the room she said, quietly, "You know God is right here, darling, right in this room with you, and so you needn't be lonely." To that assurance the child gave no answer.

A few moments later the father of the family passed by the open door of the room, and he heard a rather determined child-voice saying something he could not quite catch. He listened, and then heard the words: "'Way Dod, 'way Dod!" It was plain that the child felt uncomfortable in the presence she had been assured was there, and wanted Him just to go away!

We who are older never put it in exactly those words. Indeed, we would not use words at all to expose our feelings on that subject. We would perhaps never let our mature minds dismiss God so directly, even though we might be troubled with just a shadow of doubt about his probable goodness toward us. Not that we could be forced by any one else to admit that our Jehovah is not good. We would repudiate such disloyalty as that. But some of us do not hesitate, by expressions we use, by shake of the head, by provision we make for the worst, to question whether the goodness of God is going to reach down far enough into our needs to deal properly with them. Abstractly, we insist that he is good. Concretely, we wonder whether his goodness will apply to our case. He is to many remote and theoretical and no great comfort in the dark,—and even perhaps a bit terrifying.

But in the older day of Jehovah's self-revelation to his chosen people his goodness was the distinguishing characteristic taught by law and by prophet. It was a goodness without stain, without concession to the popular notions of deity evidenced in heathen beliefs. Jehovah's goodness was

not only unstained, but it was exceedingly patient and long-suffering, open to entreaty, recognizing the weaknesses of man in order to their cure, and hopeful about man infinitely beyond any reason that man could find in himself for such hope.

In his goodness, his righteousness, lay the eternal unchanging distinction between the God revealed to Israel, and the numberless gods of the heathen round about Israel. Jehovah's goodness required the separation of his people from the contamination of the surrounding nations, as he looked along the years of training he had planned for those through whom he would chiefly work. It was not a remote and forbidding righteousness, but a righteousness rich in invitation, in entreaty, in promise, in comfort, and in reward to those who would accept it from him.

In a later day the founder of modern philosophy, René Descartes based his belief in God upon the revelation that he discovered in his own soul. He found within himself a conception of a perfect being. He reasoned that he as an imperfect being could never through imperfections have conceived of a perfect being, but that this

Being must have been revealed to him from without his own soul. The very fact that he could have consciousness of a perfectly good Being was proof to him that such a Being, from whom alone such consciousness could come, must exist. Hence the very belief in the existence of God was in the reasoning of this thinker founded upon a revelation of an ideal perfection.

Now we may accept the testimony of the Word, and the findings of thoughtful men of open mind without debate as to the goodness of God in himself, but where we stumble, strangely enough, is at the threshold of the happy conviction that his goodness, with all its aspects, is at work for us. It is not a theological generalization; it is glowing personal experience of the soul's fellowship with Jehovah,—this goodness of God. The only reason we have ever doubted the practical reach of that goodness is a disagreement on our part with God's wisdom. He does something, or waits to do something, where our judgment or feelings would have suggested another course, and we begin to doubt his goodness, perhaps on the side of kindliness, or even on the side of eternal love.

If we will only reflect upon the facts we shall see that the only element in the universe with which God is what man would call severe and drastic is that abhorrent thing called sin. Some men dispute God's right to deal with sin as he does in some of its manifestations, and they frankly discount his goodness because of his severity just here. But if it were possible for us to see sin as God sees it, is it probable that we would then wonder at any of his moves against it? Even with our muddy notions of what sin is, would we venture to suggest that it ought to come in for more gentle treatment from Jehovah? If God were not severe with sin, how could he be good in himself or toward man?

The man who talks about being "resigned," and who with mournful voice hopelessly admits that he "can do nothing more, and is now in God's hands" has no conception whatever of the yearning, insistent, overflowing goodness of God that is pressing upon his life like a flood upon the gates that hold the water back from a drought-stricken land.

Out in China at a missionary's table two little children used to bow their heads when

grace was said, and give thanks in song. Across more than half a world they came to the homeland, and here the little children of that family in whatever home they found themselves would sing their song of gratitude. There was no doubt or hesitation when they were asked to give thanks. And these are the words they sing:

"God is great, God is good,
And we thank him for this food.
By his hand, we all are fed;
Give us, Lord, our daily bread."

Would it not gladden the heart of God if we of an older generation should put aside our doubts, our debates, our unworthy fears, and let such a song as that rise from childlike hearts, as we remember his goodness?

CHAPTER XII

HIS PATIENT LOVE

Night was upon the city, and the children of darkness were in the streets. A mother moved slowly along in the crowd, looking eagerly and anxiously into the faces of those who passed, and whenever the swinging door of a saloon flashed a glare across the pavement, she turned quickly to look within the place where she thought perhaps her son might be.

She was searching for him, searching with motherly disregard of her surroundings, intent upon taking him home. That was her one mission in the crowd, to find and to take home her son. She found him at last, a pitiable figure; and he had no desire to go home. He had broken with his ideals, he had cast love to the winds, and the bestial in him held the reins and the whip.

But in that mother's heart was a passion

stronger than the beast in the boy, a love so determined in its purpose, so compelling in its steady pull upon the boy, that he did go home in spite of the tug of his lusts. Then, as before, and afterwards, the cry of that mother in prayer and in any voicing of her love for him was ever the same: "I cannot, *cannot,* let him go!" Nor did she let him go until from a clean life, moving quietly on day by day, the Lord took him out of the fight.

What that mother did for her son, is done for every one of us day by day. If we were to be held back from sin merely by our own preferences, our family surroundings, our sense of propriety, or even by love for a very dear friend, we could not hope for any real freedom from the dominance of low and mastering passions. Unstable as we are at the best, no power of will, no uplift of heredity, no steadying star of a love that proceeds from ourselves, could save us from blunders and wreckage all along the way.

Our love for God is weakened by our weaknesses, and neither that nor any of the lesser, cherished helps could alone win us homeward when we have gone away into the bondage of sin. If God should let our

case rest wholly on our wavering purpose in unsteadily seeking him, what hope would there be for any of us?

But God is seeking us, and he does not purpose to let us go. We turn to our own ways; he patiently waits. We strain away from his leading. One man longs to be in some other profession than the one to which God has called him. Another wishes that he might escape from burdens which, if he but knew it, are already making a man of him. Another is unsettled in his doings because he is not some one else. And the Father patiently waits, and will not let us go.

Men weary of the struggle. Things they have preached do not seem to work out in practise. High standards in business are well enough in books and speeches, but how about that moment when everything will go to pieces unless the standard is let down to a "reasonable" point? And when they are tired of doing the hard, right thing, and the standard is lowered, lowered always more at such a time than a man intends, God is yet patient, and in his love has no mind to let the man go utterly down to the alluring low levels. Even though the man

has lost his clear vision of God, the Father does not lose his clear thought of what that man ought to be, and can be.

It is well for us that this is so. If God were passive in his willingness to train and to save mankind, mankind would be at the mercy of forces that are not passive. If God sought the man no more than man seeks God, man would get farther and farther away from God. If the mother had not wanted the boy to go home, far more urgently than the boy himself wanted to go, the boy would hardly have found a way to go. Not his love for her so much as her love for him was the compelling, restraining cause of his return.

In his farewell conversation with his disciples, the Son of God, with tender solicitude, spoke very plainly with them about his relation to them, and theirs to him. Nothing less than the oneness of the vine with its branches was enough to illustrate his thought of that relation. He would not have these followers of his think of themselves now as other than intimate friends, to whom he had confided what the Father had confided to him. And he calls to their attention one great fact of their relationship

which they might easily have overlooked, a fact which he clearly intended should be reassuring to them in the new responsibilities which were to come upon them. "Ye did not choose me," he said, "but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide."

Their opportunity, frail and variable as these men were, had been of the Master's choosing, and he had held on to them with patience and forbearance in spite of their doubts and questionings, and their short-sighted understanding of him.

Here is equal assurance for every one of us. Love chooses us, even when the weaknesses within us utter protest; love assures responsibility for the choice; and love continues patiently to cherish us into the bearing of an abiding fruit. Why then should any of us be hopeless over yesterday's failure, or fearful of to-day's fight?

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean's depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

CHAPTER XIII

"AND BREAKING IT HE GAVE TO THEM"

To the bewildered disciples the days after Calvary were dark with the remembrance of a lost cause and a lost Christ. He to whom they had given themselves, abandoning all for him, had come upon evil days, and life for them was filled with amazed forebodings, and with keen grief over the loss of a friend like unto no other friend they had ever known.

Two of them were on their way to Emmaus, puzzled by doubts, communing together, questioning each the other, when they were joined by one whom they did not recognize. But he at once was on close terms with them. Before long he was leading in the conversation, rehearsing the reasonableness of the great events that were so baffling to them. So drawn to him were they that they constrained him to remain with them at the day's close. Their hearts

were stirred by what he had said to them on the way. They could not let him go from them yet.

As they sat down together for the evening meal "he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them." What was it that suddenly disclosed to them their lost Christ? It was like him to bless and to give. Did they see a gesture, catch an inflection of the dear voice, perceive an expression of that beloved countenance, recalling precious memories so clearly that they could not mistake the identity of their guest? "Their eyes were opened, and they knew him." That was enough. It was a profound experience, this return of the crucified Master of their lives. They must communicate it to others forthwith. And when in Jerusalem "they rehearsed the things that had happened in the way," they explained that the Lord was disclosed to them "in the breaking of the bread." By this familiar covenant act, in the simple provision of the hour at the end of that road to a new experience, the Master made known his living presence, dispelling their doubt and turning their questionings into eager declaration of their experience.

Even the crudest materialist will not miss the intent of the scene at the end of that weary day. The hungry, desolate disciples are there. The evening meal is ready. The stranger is blessing the food. But these men have a hunger that the bread can never satisfy. The depth of the experience of that evening, infinitely deeper than any gratitude for material gifts, is in the restored, the living, the immediate Christ, to whom the flame of their love leaps forth in this hour of overjoyed and blessed surprise. Christ is the glowing, glad reality, the living Bread, before their opened eyes.

But while the intent of that scene will not be missed, there are many to-day whose eyes are still not opened to the presence of the Christ with his outstretched, pierced hands, while the merely material means of his revealing of himself are so valued that they obscure the Christ himself. The bread on the table is regarded with satisfaction by its possessor. The spiritual significance of the fact that it is there at all is, with many, hardly a fleeting thought. Indeed, one of our perils as individuals and as nations is that we are liable to have thankfulness in proportion to the quantity of material in our

possession, rather than an outright, unmeasured, and unbargained thankfulness for the great realities of the spiritual life that we cannot weigh by the pound. The disciples at Emmaus were undoubtedly grateful for the bread placed before them; but the bread did not obscure the great spiritual fact of Christ.

There is nothing more irregular, shifting, and changeful than material possessions as a basis for gratitude; for the instability of the things themselves and the uncertainty as to whether they are to prove a blessing or a curse leave us quite in the dark as to any unvarying test of their real value to the individual. A good farm may be a bad gift to one man, while a poor farm may be a good gift to another. A very profitable business may wreck one man, while a struggling enterprise may be the making of another man. The mere having of a certain quantity of goods is wholly problematical as a standard cause for gratitude. Yet we are liable to count up our individual and national causes for thankfulness chiefly in material terms.

But whatever the uncertainties of material holdings, there are great spiritual

verities ready for all, pressing in upon every life in a thousand ways, and measured only in the terms of infinity. It is a glorious fact that the best in life is freely offered to every soul. While material possessions are elusive, and gained by unending toil, spiritual things not only are not withheld, but they crowd in upon us in lavish, outpoured wealth of loving provision. They are not won in the rough-handed competition of a few dynamic souls, but are simply to be *received* in quiet, yielding faith, alike by the most masterful, or the most frail and unaggressive personality. The lesser values are open to a few dominating spirits driving on to their chosen material goal. The eternal and supreme values are not only open to all, but are pressed upon all with loving, patient insistence.

One man approaches Thanksgiving Day with little joy in his heart. He has no bumper crops on his land. He has worked hard and faithfully, too. He drives the old horse and buggy even yet, while his neighbors roar past him in automobiles. He almost wishes that the president would name a day of thanksgiving no more, because that day makes a man think of what

he has not quite as much as of what he has. Another has added farm to farm, until his cares have been multiplied ten-fold. He sees little now of his wife or children. He has grown rich in money and lands. And yet as Thanksgiving Day draws near he recoils from its observance, because his possessions are so meaningless to him in the shadow of what they have cost his own inner life, and his family. Both these men are using false measures, and each is pitifully needy at the heart of his life.

It is a glorious fact that the Christ who is abundantly adequate to the need of every life is not so much a possession offered to all, as he is a possessor. Unless this were true, our ability to lay hold upon him would be the disappointing measure of our possession of him. He is not only ready to enter into every life, but he wills to in-fill that life with his own, so that he may completely control the whole being into which he has been received. The restored Christ at Emmaus was a restored Master, who would take charge of these bewildered men. He had never been absent from them. Only by accommodation of language can it be said that *he* was restored to them. It was

rather that they were brought, in their great need, back to him.

Thanksgiving even for the supreme spiritual gift does not, then, find its source in a sense of what we hold as our own, but far more in the knowledge that we who are so easily bewildered by empty and alluring aims are held, if we are willing, by the risen, living Lord, in balanced sanity and service through his indwelling. Not what we have in our keeping, but the blessed fact that Christ has us in his keeping, quickens us to proclaim each new day a day of thanksgiving, in abiding confidence and joy.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REACTION OF THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

The most pathetic victim of the critical spirit is the habitual critic himself. Answering the invitation of human frailty in others, he has yielded to the temptation of pointing out defects until his own vision becomes defective in ability to see anything else. His alertness for blemishes, his sensitiveness to whatever has gone wrong as he sees it, become so highly developed that the refinements of character around him, the glory of God shining in a human face, seem unreal to him, or at least only incidental, and his mind, suffering from acute criticitis, darts like a hawk at its prey.

It may take years of practise to produce an out-and-out critic of the destructive sort, who lives a life of misanthropic elation over his exploits, and who cares little for his loss of power in appreciative seeing. To some

there is a curiously alluring delight in the ability to find flaws, to point out how unlovely the beautiful really is, to let no one enjoy anything with unalloyed happiness. And that delight is a terribly subtle poison, because such pride is taken in the very faculty that destroys the higher vision, and throws into contempt the generous, uncalculating estimates that enlarge the soul. The elation that comes from striking off keen cynicisms is the lure that misleads many into a growing hardness of attitude toward others and toward life.

There are some in whose presence we hardly dare to become enthusiastic because any gladness of soul only invites bitter or ironical criticism. But the most profound harm enters thereby, not into the soul of the suppressed enthusiast but into the being of the man who has been unwilling that there should be any unqualified enthusiasm anywhere near him. He it is who suffers most, loses most, is most to be pitied, because the best impulses of his heart have been so blunted and even destroyed. The reaction upon him is far heavier than the action upon the heart of another. In the critic the springs are dry; in the other the

springs, though closed for a moment, flow on again and are cleared by the flow.

There are some who earnestly believe that they are simply looking at men and things with level eyes when they see in the large the sins of men and the defects of things. They hold that these matters ought not to be overlooked in our estimates, and that only fools shut their eyes to the facts. Sometimes, indeed, we are as great fools when we fail to do this as when we do it. There are occasions when we must use all possible perception and sagacity in measuring others, weighing all the factors we can discern, as when an employer chooses a helper, or a people a leader. But no employer whose habit of mind is to see chiefly the bad in others can possibly know with any accuracy when he has a good applicant before him, or a good worker in his service. The reaction of that habit makes him sensitive to what he does not want, and insensitive to what he does want.

The church that seeks a pastor, and has freely indulged the critical spirit for any length of time, gets into a condition of mind and heart wherein is small hope for choosing a pastor who has the needed qualifica-

tions, because that church has destroyed its own power of discernment in the realm of wise choices on a high spiritual plane. The reaction of the critical spirit in that case makes it almost impossible for the church to find a leader with the qualities most needed just there, because it becomes so hard to appreciate or recognize him when found. A congregation in which the spirit of criticism of the pastor and of one another is abroad among the people needs a miracle of grace to revive it into a condition which will justify a pastor in thinking the aggregation is a church at all.

And what reaction there is upon many a man who is keenly critical in his home life! He speaks his mind, to be sure, and he prides himself on his frankness. His children gradually give up the glad bringing of affairs to him just for a talk about them, because he is so sure to find a flaw somewhere, and discourse about it, when they know all the time about the flaw, and only just wanted a happy friendly time with father. His wife ceases to consult him about some problems on which she herself is clear enough, but over which he always thinks it necessary to become impressive.

All she wanted was encouragement; and what she got was criticism, already taken fully into account, and a heartache beneath a dutiful attention to his—vaporings, any one else would call them, but not she. That father's step on the walk at evening starts none of the children scurrying to the door to welcome him. No, there are things father won't like, they are sure, as soon as he steps within the door, and they wonder just what the particular things will be tonight. It's just father's way, after all, and he really does get a good welcome from his lenient and considerate household. But oh, the reaction on the man in unloveliness of character, in austerity, in needless burdens, in growing hardness of heart!

If the reaction is like this in our human relationship, what of that hidden relationship to Christ that constitutes life in its normal state? Is it possible that a man may be in true fellowship with Him, and yet find any intellectual or spiritual satisfaction in saying smartly critical things? There are times when a man must speak other words than words of praise, but the admission of that fact ought not to give an excuse for indulgence in criticism as a

luxury. It is not enough in considering the possibilities of fellowship with Christ to say that he was a very direct critic, and hence his followers may rightly follow him in that. Our Lord could speak as man cannot speak, and no man can take up the whip of criticism with grim delight, and lash right and left with it, on the ground that his enjoyment of the process makes him more like Christ. Our Lord never gives one the impression that he is getting personal enjoyment out of his own drastic criticism of others, but he speaks with high authority and dignity because he must speak "straight as a line of light," or with a breaking heart of love over the sins of man. We cannot justify our captiousness by his words, or the unholy joy of the smart critic or gossip-monger by anything in him. Indulgence in these things shatters any true fellowship with him, because such things are not of him. That is a reaction of the critical spirit which men often overlook when bemoaning their sense of remoteness from God.

Is the calm and experienced counsel of Paul too tame and impractical for strong natures of to-day? Or might not some of

us show more true strength in Christlikeness if we were to follow that counsel,—"Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass,"—yes, caught in the very act,—"ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

"Come, children, let us go!
We travel hand in hand;
Each in his brother finds his joy
In this wild stranger land.
The strong be quick to raise
The weaker when they fall;
Let love and peace and patience bloom
In ready help for all."

CHAPTER XV

TWO LISTS

A man was lying awake in the night. He had been awake for a long time, and his thoughts had traveled far. A third of a century had unrolled its panorama of events before him. The picture had many lights and shadows, hills and valleys, and the signs of many summers and winters upon it.

The man had been recounting one by one the events that stood out most sharply in his memory, and he had become heavy-hearted in the process. All life had taken on the gray hue of a sea under the murk of brewing weather, and the list of painful experiences had lengthened like the long dark line of distant wind coming across the waters. The sense of inescapable stress of soul and body had become oppressive as he lay there in the dark, and the more the list grew the less resistance his spirit could bring to bear upon the depressing reaction

following the mental compilation of calamity.

Bereavements were remembered, some of them marked by sudden and violent strokes. Personal failures seemed almost numberless as the man reviewed the years, and some of them now seemed so stupid and needless and black! On the slack tides of energy that flow sluggishly in the hours just before dawn the driftwood of wasted days moved in monotonous eddies, and the sight of it became almost intolerable.

Then the man began to make out another list in his mind. It would never do to count up the years in terms of regret. The picture surely had its lights as well as its shadows. Many shining moments emerged, —boyhood days on land and sea; uniting with the church; college honors in classroom and on the cinder-path; the enthusiasms of business beginnings; the wedding; and the faces of happy children. Followed the march of events in middle life, with wide travel and growing interest in world-movements, and multiplied friendships in many lands. Why, how the list grows and glows as item after item is mentally noted!

However, it did not seem to compare in

length with the first list. Look at the second as long as he would, his mind would revert heavily to the first, and back and forth over the things that hurt he would move with brooding wonder and only half-smothered rebellion. Why should life be worked out with any such painful factors? Why not a more open road, and flooding sunshine over more of the journey?

It began to dawn upon the man that he ought to be ashamed of himself. That was the downright English of it. He had been a poor artist, a poor compiler, and neglectful. What was the point in tabulating troubles? Was it not the subtle pleasure that the neurotic finds in self-pity? Anybody could whine out a list of calamities and get weak in the knees at the thought of a future like the past. But what business had a Christian man to compile his troubles, his failures, his regrets, for consideration about two o'clock in the morning, or at any other time? Such stuff does not make good material for life's landmarks. When we get into the habit of counting time by the strokes of calamity that clang like firebells upon our consciousness it is time for us to do a little real remembering.

For, like the man in the dark, we in the night or day often leave our two lists quite incomplete. They ought to be overwritten with the fact of God's love. You cannot make a list of life's doings and omit that without strange and heart-breaking results. You cannot interpret either the good or the bad list without God. If we attempt to balance the untoward and the friendly events of life our judgment fails anyway, and when we have done what we can we have measured nothing. All our lists of life's events are hopelessly muddled unless God's love is there to straighten them out.

Thus the man began to reason; and it was more than reasoning, for "the love of God is wider than the measure of man's mind." Morbid inclinations cannot withstand the sweep of that love moving with cleansing and refreshing and renewing through life. He saw that apart from deliberate or known sin in the life, the two lists are not accurately separable by any human judgment of their value, but are blended in a record of mercy and love beyond the refinements of man's definition. A neurotic analysis of events has no true color or reason under the white light of love eternal and unchanging.

The flesh may recoil from pain, and the spirit shrink from some of its contacts with repugnant occurrences, but in the end there is no sound and satisfying classification of events other than under the general head of God's love.

Our mature judgments often suffer rebuke in the word of a little child. One evening at the dinner table this same man saw his little five-year-old girl slip down from her chair and walk quietly around to him. She climbed up beside him, put her arms around his neck, and whispered something to him. He could not hear what she said. How deaf we are to the unexpectedly fine sounds!

"Won't you just stand beside me, where I can see you, and say that again?" he said.

The child did as he asked, and looking into his face she said once more the whispered words. Then he saw and heard, too, and his heart leaped. For the child had said only this:

"Sweeter as the years go by."

"Why, dearie," exclaimed the man, "do you know that hymn?"

"I know one verse of it," she answered brightly.

"Then say it for us, won't you?" And the child stood back a little, and in clear tones repeated just the same words again. To her they were the whole verse.

To the man they were the whole answer to the spirit of disquiet, and they seemed to carry him and those around the table into a large and sunny upland country where the winds of heaven blow freely across a happy land whose people, because they are God's people, see all in the light of his unfailing love.

CHAPTER XVI

ATTACKING THE DISAGREEABLE DUTY

Every one shrinks from doing a disagreeable duty. Flesh and spirit recoil at the very thought of contact with the rasp of a file or the bite of an acid. Hence it is that the duty we do not like, the duty in the doing of which we foresee unpleasant sensations, we defer as long as we dare in order to brace ourselves to meet the shock. And it is quite probable that we shall spend so much thought and energy in getting the props well set that we shall have no strength left for the real encounter. The last, the most costly, the most exhausting way to deal with a disagreeable duty is to put it off until we have strength to meet it.

A woman finds herself with a surly, or unwilling, or incapable, helper in the household work. What can she do? Help is scarce. The housework must be done. If

she says a word, there may be a scene, and a departure. Yet in her heart that troubled housekeeper knows that she must eventually do one of three things,—train the helper, dismiss her, or let the household run at loose ends. Each one of these ways has its painful features, the last the worst of all and most dreaded. Yet the possible friction and unpleasantness of either of the first two ways of escape push both so far into the future from day to day that the last, which is the worst of all situations to the housekeeper, comes to be true in that home, and chaos reigns. One of the three plans must be tried at one time or another. The last, which the housekeeper would not tolerate at first, becomes a fact, because training or dismissal have been deferred. The disagreeable duty not done has become no less disagreeable with the passing days.

A boy of considerable promise in a business office was expected to file in its proper order, every day, the large incoming mail of the concern. It was a tedious task, but easily done in a few hours of close application. But it was a disagreeable duty. The boy conceived a dislike for it. He evaded it, postponed it, complained over it, and finally

so deeply had the poison entered into his habits that he became almost helpless in the doing of anything promptly, and lost his position. It was a blow to him and a disappointment to his friends. Yet his determination to confine himself as much as possible to the agreeable duties of his place was bound to cost him heavily in the end.

A school-boy, on the other hand, to whom algebra was actual distress, made up his mind that he would no longer claim the exclusive right to the foot of the class, a position where he had made a deep rut for himself, but would stand first or know the reason why. Then the struggle began. It was never easy, but he never was at the foot again. Gradually the principles were mastered, the examples worked out by dint of disagreeable digging and in spite of frequent inward revolt, until the boy was the acknowledged rival of an exceptionally able mathematician in the struggle for first place. He never won first place permanently, and he never learned to like algebra; but he did learn the gain of doing a disagreeable duty, which is a lesson not second to algebra.

When a thing ought to be done, the question of whether we enjoy doing it or not has

no rightful place in our thought. And the thing we dislike is not liked more at the end of a long and apprehensive examination of it than at the beginning. The longer we think about the painful, uncomfortable side of any duty, the more that side of it comes into prominence, and the harder it becomes to attend to that duty.

If a man fears the painful and disagreeable effects of breaking a habit which he knows it is his duty to break, he will often cling to that wrong habit because he prefers wrong-doing to inconvenience and discomfort. He will not always put it so harshly to himself, but he knows that his choice of the habit, as over against his choice of duty, means only one thing—moral cowardice. The expectation of personal discomfort, the fear of pain, lead him to make daily choices in favor of wrong-doing, with the fitful purpose of some day breaking that habit, but meanwhile locking its chains about him with increasing, binding pressure on character, until that unmanly shrinking from the disagreeable may work his ruin. And what course, in the long run, could possibly bring more of the unpleasant, more of the harrowing and distressing, into his life than the

surrender of his manhood to his fears?

The shrinking of flesh and spirit from the disagreeable duty needs to be met with the same determined moral courage as any other moral weakness. It may be that the thing one dislikes will never cease to be disliked. It may be that the man who would like to be in another business, the woman who is bearing up as best she can under the ways of a selfish husband, the minister whose surroundings are now and may continue to be distasteful,—it may be that these and others like them cannot rightfully turn aside from their daily disagreeable associations. But the sure way to make the situation as hard and as trying as possible is to dodge and defer the unpleasant duties one is called upon to perform. The tasks of an uncongenial business must be done promptly and thoroughly, or that business will fail; the selfish husband needs help, if any man on earth needs it; the mean-spirited, back-biting person in the minister's congregation who criticises him so unmercifully must not be anathema to him, but a challenge to his highest attainments in spirit and character. Everywhere, in every walk of life, the shrinking from doing what one ought to do,

the distaste for duty when duty brings pain, calls for relentless resistance.

The power of resistance just here is a mark of character. The weakling dodges the disagreeable because he dislikes it, and becomes more a weakling in so doing. The strong soul tackles the disagreeable even though disliking it, and becomes stronger in so doing. He will not risk the breaking down of character by measuring life according to ease or hardness, or duty by the pleasant or unpleasant. "Ought" is a mighty word with him, and it drives him through to his haven as the engines of the ocean liner drive her straight through the smoking seas of the winter North Atlantic. But the weakling steers timidly, is taken aback, falls into the trough of the sea, is dismasted, and becomes a derelict, drifting with sodden flounderings, awash at the will of the wind and sea.

Who of us would willingly choose the fate of the derelict? And to choose is ours. If love of ease and pleasantness sways us, we are at the mercy of the evil within and around us. If love of duty-doing, duty pleasant or disagreeable, possesses us, drives us under so high a pressure of Godward

obligation that we get at the thing to be done without stopping to wonder whether it will hurt or not, evil will meet with a resistance not found in the man whose shrinking from pain makes him a laggard and faithless.

CHAPTER XVII

"THEY TOIL NOT, NEITHER DO THEY SPIN"

He was a very nervous man, even for an American. His table companions, in the big dining room of the sanitarium, could easily see that. He could seldom sit through the quick service of the meals that he ordered. A nibble here and there at his food, and then up he would jump, and out of the dining room he would go, quite unable to stand the strain of any waiting. He was just an overwrought business machine.

But the man loved flowers. In the center of the table were freshly cut flowers or growing plants. Every day during his sojourn at the sanitarium he saw to it that they were there, without fail. When one of his table mates expressed appreciation of this, he said hurriedly, with a shadowy smile, "Yes, I always have flowers on the table at home."

One day he was suddenly called away by a telegram, and he went without delay, bequeathing to the table a beautiful budding amaryllis, which he had just ordered. The plant was quite large, and in its serenity and substantial strength seemed to be a reminder of what its owner might have been.

The lily slowly unfolded day after day, until its brilliant coloring could be seen across the spacious room, in which scores of men and women gathered at meals. If you had glanced around that room you would not have supposed that you were looking out upon a group of persons, practically all of whom were suffering with one form or another of bodily ailment. A closer look into tired eyes or a little talk with some in that company would have revealed anew the fact that many a man or woman goes bravely on with life's duties without letting the outside world know very much about the inner grief and suffering.

A long spell of dreary weather had been depressing to many in the sanitarium. The clouds and the rain, and the rain and the clouds, with more rain, had gloomily shut out the sky and turned the good roads into mud for many days. It was a bit hard to

keep the sun shining in one's spirit, especially when pain or disappointment, or fear of the days to come, had as a background the dreary landscape veiled in rain. The sun cleared a shining way for itself at last, the clouds fled over the edge of the world, and life seemed cheerier.

One evening, when the dining room was quite full, the sun hung low in the west, and sent its beams far across the tables where so many ill and despondent and burdened people were trying to seem quite the opposite. Suddenly the lily seemed to glow with heavenly light. A sunbeam, coming through a western window, reached halfway down the long room and rested fairly on that lily. And the amaryllis gathered to itself, and sent back into the room, a glory that touched its own glorious colors with gold. Indeed, to those who began to notice the glowing flower, it seemed as though that beam of light rested only on the open bell of the lily, as the flame of color hung above the snowy cloth of the table.

A curious silence fell upon the guests in that room. Eager eyes sought the shining flower. Faces were turned toward it, sad and weary faces, that were gradually trans-

formed as they gazed. For the lily spoke so clearly a message of good cheer, trust, and God's lavish care that even the heavy-hearted and well-nigh hopeless could not miss that shining lesson. Some rose from their places and came over to the table, where they might look more closely at that wonderful sun-touched flower, and they talked in low voices about it, and smiled at one another because of the radiance in which they stood.

What has become of the nervous business man who placed the flower there? He never knew what that lily meant to some in the room. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like this lily, because his magnificence never so lifted the sick and the despondent and the suffering into a sunset vision of the great fact of a loving Father's providing care.

If that business man, weary with his toiling and his spinning of the web of so-called profit, could have been seated there just then, might not that flower have had a glad message for him?

CHAPTER XVIII

THE JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The old Pacific Garden Mission was crowded on that wild winter's night. Outside the snow was whirling through the streets and drifting into doorways. A motley crowd of men had drifted in beyond the snow, and had filled the meeting room to overflowing.

A rousing song service was on until the time for testimony came. One after another of the men arose to tell what the mission had done for him in the name of Christ, and to urge others to confess the Saviour. Then from the thick of the crowd a large, well-dressed man rose to his feet and looked out with smiling face over the haggard countenances around him.

"Boys," he said, "I cannot tell you how happy I am to-night. The Lord has done much for me. I used to be a drunkard on the street, but to-night I am able to stand here to tell you that I am no longer troubled

by drink. It has been a long time since I have touched the stuff. Life is all different for me to-night. You know just by looking at me that I haven't touched a drink for a long, long time. It was just Christ who did this for me. He has taken away the temptation from me and I am free from the old habit. I don't know how to tell you how happy I am." Then he lifted his head, squared his shoulders, stretched out his arms, and smiled broadly as he looked around the room.

"Boys," he cried, "I don't believe I could be any happier unless I was bigger!"

You do not wonder that all through that pitiful crowd there was an answering smile in the glow of this big man's joy. For Christian joy is a rare thing. Christian fortitude is not rare. Christian work is common. Christian faith is everywhere manifest in the lives of many who are serving Christ far beyond any ability that their fellows could ever guess they possessed. But is not the aboundingly joyful Christian so rare that he is a distinguished person among the hundreds one meets? Yet joy is normally a distinguishing characteristic of the Gospel. It was for the "joy that was set

before him" that Jesus "endured the cross." He said to his friends, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." That is giving joy a primary place.

If a Christian lacks joy is he interpreting to the world the Gospel or the person of Christ?

No sooner has one entered into full, conscious relationship with Christ than the sheer gladness of the whole transaction breaks upon his soul like a glorious dawn after a night of storm, with an entirely new sense of intimate fellowship with one who makes all things new. The joy of that fellowship springs spontaneously from the relationship into which we have entered. We do not even invite it or ask for it. It is there inherently, and we are steadily conscious of that abiding joy unless in our own willfulness and perversity or because of entanglement in the things that are not of Christ our attention is drawn away from him, our sense of intimacy broken.

As soon as we have entered into fellowship with Christ we also enter into a peculiar and far-reaching fellowship with his followers everywhere. The names of the heroes

of the faith of bygone years take on a different meaning to us. Our friends whom we have known as Christians become much better understood. We did not care in former days to let our conversation with them get into what we then thought were rather unpractical regions of mere speculation, but of which now we speak with the eagerness of lowlanders who want to get a breath of mountain air. The whole significance of the word fellowship is different and richer, and it gets into our conversation as it never did before.

We find an entirely new joy in service. Perhaps we were always more or less philanthropic, ready to do kind things for other folks. Now, however, we carry a special commission; and the Christian who does not know what it is to execute that commission is still ignorant of one of the keenest joys of the whole Christian experience. We are expected to tell others about the Lord Jesus and to lead them to him. Is there any joy like that which fills one's heart when one has led a friend to Christ and has seen the countenance of that friend light up with the gladness of the new fellowship with him, willingly accepted and entered into?

Another joy of the Christian life is rest in guidance. Once we were harried and stressed and perplexed. Worry was a common experience. But the new fellowship with Jesus revealed entirely new possibilities of guidance. We began to submit our questions to him in quiet waiting. We got accustomed to asking his counsel about the simplest matter. There came to be a real joy in not knowing how things would work out, a delight beyond words in simply trusting. There was a time perhaps when we were driven to distraction by impetuous haste to reach conclusions in matters that had to be left open for a little while. Fellowship with Christ teaches us that while we are poor timekeepers and makers of appointments, God times his appointments to a nicety, and we find great joy in watching the unfolding of his plans under his own hand, instead of trying impatiently to tear them open, as we used to, with our nervous fingers.

A comprehensive joy of the Christian life is to learn for the first time what joy really is. The old burden of sin spoiled joy. In Christ the burden and the bondage alike are taken away from us. For the first time we

are free to know pure joy, the glad exaltation of a heart in unhindered fellowship with one whose joy is so great that he never fully set it forth in human words for the mind of man. What his disciples saw in him he intended they should have in themselves. Christ himself was his definition of joy. And there is no joy apart from him. Have you as much as you could have?

CHAPTER XIX

"AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY"

It is a passion with every thoroughly alive man or woman to live life to the full. No one of that clan wants to pass through the world with life at a low ebb. The flood-tide of opportunity and achievement is the great experience the soul longs for. Anything short of the flood-tide has too much fellowship with the mud-flat, dead-level of monotonous mediocrity, and the whole forlorn outlook and savor of the favorite haunts of the clam. Unless one can know that the tide is rising, pushing its clean, crowding waters over the low levels and up the white beaches, one is uneasy, and impatient, and doubtful of the efficiency that has had its opportunity but seems to have missed its achievement.

No one can rightly be content with a life that is less than it might be. It is normal and right that this passion for living should

grip us. The powers of brain and body and spirit must press on or die. We need the sense of occupation, in which faculties are taxed, time seems to fly, and the bounds of our activities are bent and driven outwards. No one is really living who is not conscious of demand, pressure, urgency, in the calls of duty.

Many of us do not have the courage to want to live in any full-blooded, flood-tide fashion. The pressure that we need is smoothly avoided; the taxing under any work is dodged as some men dodge other taxes; the bounds of our activities are never strained outward, but are forever narrowing; and we contentedly watch them come in, settling down into the thing that pleases us, soothes us, and does not make any severe demands upon us. This is not life. It is less than half-life.

Others of us have never attempted to use one-tenth of the power that God has given us. We lift with the little finger when we might lay hold with both hands. We have never known what we could do, because we have never driven ourselves to the limit. We work in fractions, not in units. Afraid of overdoing, we underdo. Our petty aches

and pains, bad weather, bad roads, hot weather, cold weather,—anything untoward,—is cause for inaction, and sometimes ample means will make a man so easy in mind and body that he never enters at any time into the glory of hard work, the taxing use of his powers, but lives a listless and unfruitful life because he is not obliged to live otherwise by outward pressure. Such a man can put on the appearance of manliness; he can wear an earnest look; but body and brain are still in the playtime of boyhood.

There is another and far greater company whose lives are not yet at the flood-tide,—those of us who are not afraid of the full life, who have no part or lot with the listless lover of ease, but who are nevertheless living far within the bounds that might be ours. Every new day is only the old story of drudgery renewed. The whole life seems set about with littleness, with the subduing, smothering atmosphere of duties that seem to have but a small place in the universal movement. It is all a matter of three meals a day, the trip to and from work, or the cleaning of rooms, and answering of door-bells; the doing of trivial things for the children in the home, the unending fight

for gain at the store or office, an occasional visit to the sick, with here and there a meeting or conference, and sometimes long, lonely days and evenings when nothing especially worthy seems to have been accomplished. Life becomes routine. It loses zest. Its horizon narrows, and the whole being dwindles into what is only a semblance of the true human complex we call man. It is a busy life, but atmosphered in a hopeless sense of one's own inability to break out of it to anything fuller and richer.

In contrast with this life is another into which many have entered deliberately, a life of intense activity, noised up and down the land as exemplary in the things most to be desired. It is glutted with things. Its purpose is possession. Its god is gain. And its hours are packed with every known means for self-gratification, with no horizon beyond that narrowest of all life-bounds, the pitiful circle of self. Into this glittering and shallow life many a man is drawn by the desire to compete for its prizes, and to be well ahead in the spectacular procession. Here is spurious fulness of life, parading so impressively before men that the ignorant are completely deceived by it. The

great constructive geniuses, whose wealth is incidental to the normal outworking of their genius, are not in that feverish procession. It is made up of another kind, whose lives are given over to the mere pageantry of materialism in its most degraded forms of selfishness, and where fulness of life is quite unknown and unsought.

Besides all these there are the fearful and unenterprising who do not dare to move out into new experiences, who prefer past doings to future possibilities as the measure of what they can do. These are never pioneers in anything. They have no sense of growth, no pressure from within, no compelling ideals beyond the things they can easily do. They are by no means free from worry, but their concern, unfortunately, is not over their present condition. What gives them sleepless nights and cold perspiration is the thought that they may, much against their will, be thrown out of present grooves, out of the old, into the new and untried. Their heart's wish is not that their world "may spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change," but rather that it may turn moderately on its axis as nearly in one spot as possible. To those of us in this state

of mind the worst pains imaginable are "growing-pains."

But how may cowardice, and disuse of powers, and the dulness of drudgery, selfish materialism, fear of change, and all the drag of sinful weakness within us give place to the fulness of life for which the inmost soul is hungering? How sturdily we have tried to lift ourselves into the life we long for! What bitter hours of vain striving we have had in the effort to be courageous, to arouse dead powers, to be cheerful, when the daily grind is almost unbearable, and to walk smilingly and hopefully into the darkness of a new experience through which we cannot see at all! How we have fought with self-gratification and the lust for the things that perish even in our grasp! And while we have been trying to do all this for ourselves, or hopelessly submitting to the narrowing of life, Jesus has been close beside us, offering freely, as the expressed purpose of his own life, the overflowing life for which we seek.

It is a marvel that we do not accept that offer in its fulness, that we do not open our littleness to the incoming of the ideals, the hopefulness, the far vision, the intrepid

pioneer spirit of Jesus, the complete indwelling of the Christ in us as our present Saviour from the life that is less than it might be.

The purpose of his coming is fulfilled in us only when we accept, in accepting him, the overflowing life, the abundant life which it was and is his purpose to bring. It is not a larger sphere that we need, but a fuller life in whatever sphere is ours to-day. And Christ does not truly dwell in any man without causing that man's life to break old boundaries, to take on new passions for service, new hopefulness, new purity, new gains in character and power, whatever the sphere of his life. Fulness of life, its abundance, is not a question of what a man's work is, but what he is in that work if God has called him to it. To a friend who asked Phillips Brooks the secret of his life, he wrote:

"Indeed the more I have thought it over, the less in some sense I have seemed to have to say. And yet the more it has seemed to me that these last years have had a peace and fulness which there did not use to be. I say it in deep reverence and humility. I do not think it is the mere quietness of ad-

vancing age. I am sure it is not indifference to anything which I used to care for. I am sure that it is a deeper knowledge and truer love of Christ. And it seems to me impossible that this should have come in any way except by the experience of life. . . . All experience comes to be but more and more of pressure of His life on ours. It cannot come by one flash of light, or one great convulsive event. It comes without haste and without rest in this perpetual living of our life with Him. And all the history, of outer or inner life, of the changes of circumstances, or the changes of thought, gets its meaning and value from this constantly growing relation to Christ.

"I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is no figure of speech. It is the realest thing in the world. And every day makes it realer. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on."

If life is not at its flood with any one of us, why not have it so, and "have it abundantly"?

CHAPTER XX

THE INESCAPABLE SPIRIT OF GOD

No searching of man after God can for a single instant approach in eagerness and persistence God's quest for man.

The mystic yearns for God with a holy longing that is restless and unsatisfied until the barriers of material contacts with life have been overcome. The sinner, heartsick and outworn by his self-chosen facing away from God, turns at last to seek him with contrition and the unutterable longing of an emptiness of soul that has become intolerable. But neither of these seekers after God can approach in their passionate search the unresting, infinitely patient, age-long and persistent search of God for man. Their purposes may waver, and their zeal die away in the atmosphere of the earthly and the material; his never does, through the endless years.

And the Spirit of God is inescapable. Men

try to avoid him; to turn resolutely to their material concerns; to enter with zest into enterprises that promise selfish gains or passing pleasures; to become men of the world, molded by its ideals, and apt in its ways, and clever at its games of give and take. But underneath all this, running steadily down the center of life's currents, is the main stream of God's desire for man's surrender to him. It pushes past all the eddies beside its course, and is seen to be inevitable, no matter what ripples and cross-currents disturb its surface. Men are busy enough outside the sweep of that current; they fight along its edges for success; they gain worldly power, break others down, build up a fellow-workman here and there; their faces take on the grimness and cynical look of life as they choose to live it, while God very silently often, but always inescapably, is pressing his quest for the soul that may live if it will.

The Psalmist unfolds this truth in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, with broad imagery and minute particularity in his inspired effort to show how thorough and loving and far-reaching is this search for man. God knows us. He has studied me

thoroughly. He knows when I stay or go, and where. He anticipates my thoughts. He knows what I think and do. Even my words he notes. Around me is his enveloping care, and I can feel his hand upon me.

And now comes the outcry of a soul that is simply staggered by the vision. Heavenward leaps the imagination; God is there. Down into the depths, and God is there. Then, with the vision of the poet, the true seer, out through the gates of day the soul wings its course, and circles the wide sweep of the sea horizon, and behold, that loving hand is even there, in guidance and support. Then the darkness comes; but it is no longer darkness, for to be with God in the dark is simply to be in the white light of day.

No one has greater need of appreciating this truth than the Christian who has thus far kept God a little at a distance. It is hard to believe such folly and sin of ourselves, in the light of what we know is our belief in God. Yet many of us have only an incomplete and unpractical belief, which often would seem, from our practise of it, little more than a cool assent of the mind to a plain fact, rather than the outpouring of a loyal heart of love and self-surrender in

the service of the King. To believe that God is true is one thing; to be true to that belief in daily living means something more than an assent to the fact. To believe that the Spirit is pressing lovingly into the sanctuary of our lives to bless us is one thing; to let the Spirit have the freedom of our lives in ungrudging hospitality is another thing. And the believing Christian who knows nothing of headlong and self-forgetting, self-abolishing abandon in throwing life open to the insistent and unwearying Spirit of God, is still holding God at a distance.

Some Christians have so misunderstood the Father and the Son and the Spirit that in times of peculiar danger or unexpected failure of cherished plans they have been tempted to think that God has withdrawn his guiding hand, and has decided that he could no longer use such dull and unserviceable tools. A man has made a failure of the thing to which he has given his life, and thinks his work ended. A woman finds herself bereft of husband and children, and, standing like a lost traveler on a trackless plain, sees no hope of ever getting her bearings again. Or health has gone, and shut-in

days replace days of intense activity among men, and this is taken as a sign that God is through with that worker. So reasons the troubled mind, gathering up in this way a burden that is quite beyond the strength of our spiritual and physical frame.

But God is there, just the same. He has not ceased his work. And he has not cast aside his workers. Some are diverted, in his plan, to other service. Some in what they call failure will for the first time learn how God defines success. Some in loneliness will learn as never before what it is to walk with the King in a large companionship thronging with rich experiences. Some in the quiet room will do more than in the pulpit, or office, or school-room, or will do less, and will do either with an unconquerable good-cheer because living out the plainly revealed plan of God.

The blessed fact is that hard upon these puzzling and sometimes heartbreaking experiences out of which we come as changed and chastened souls, the Spirit of God is following as the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Guide into the whole truth of the matter, and not even the night of our own making or the shadows of this world in

which we live need at all to hold us away from him.

"Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee:
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.

"Alone with Thee, amid the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee, in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

"When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer;
Sweet the repose, beneath Thy wings o'ershadowing,
But sweeter still to wake and find Thee there.

"So shall it be at last in that bright morning
When the soul waketh, and life's shadows flee;
O! in that hour, and fairer than day's dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought, I am with Thee!"

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